

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Coca-Cola Building  
other names/site number Western Auto Building; Chandler Building

**2. Location**

street & number 2101-11 Grand Avenue n/a not for publication  
city, town Kansas City n/a vicinity  
state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64108

**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
n/a

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the  
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Frederick A. Brunner, Ph.D., P.E., Director Date 7/8/88

Department of Natural Resources, and State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National  
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade:

Business, Warehouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commercial/Trade:

Business, Office

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete; Metal (steel);

Brick; Terra Cotta

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Reflecting the Commercial Style that was popular during the early 20th century, the Coca-Cola Building retains its original integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Constructed in 1914-15 of reinforced concrete with a tar and gravel roof, the twelve-story (plus basement) Coca-Cola Building is located in a triangular lot situated on a bluff overlooking McGee Street. Commercial buildings are located to the north, west and south. The building retains original exterior features including its dramatic curved southeast facade, classical ornamentation, terra cotta cornice with dentils and palmettes, brick veneer and pilasters, and three-part "Chicago School" windows. The general interior plan has also been retained. With its distinctive shape and oval-shape electric sign, the Coca-Cola Building is a visual landmark in Kansas City.

The Coca-Cola Building measures approximately 166 feet on Grand Avenue to the west, 102 feet on 21st Street to the north, 203 feet along the curved side of the building facing east and south over the tracks of the Kansas City Terminal Railroad Company which serves the building. The exterior displays brick and terra cotta ornamentation and brick veneer. Only the storefront (located on the third level off Grand Avenue) has been altered with modern plate glass and a modern entranceway. The large oval-shape electric sign (formerly "Coca-Cola"; now "Western Auto") rests on the flat roof and can be seen for miles around. Pilasters (brick on the north and west; terra cotta on the southeast), visually separate the building into nine (west), ten (southeast) and five (north) bays. On each facade, beltcourses are located above and below the third level. Fenestration on levels three through ten include three-part "Chicago School" windows. The tenth level windows have arched lintels and centrally located keystones. A bracketed cornice with dentils beneath its eave surround the roofline. Palmettes project at evenly spaced intervals above the cornice. The lower basement level provides a trucking station one block east. This level also leads to the main loading dock, and switch tracks.

Each floor contains approximately 10,000 square feet.<sup>1</sup> The building was designed to carry a floor load sufficient for general loft tenancies. The main entrance to the building is located on the third level off Grand Avenue.

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COCA-COLA BUILDING

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A central corridor leads to two sets of passenger elevators off to the left (north). Stairs located off to the right (south) also lead to the upper levels. Another set of stairs are located at the southern end of the building. Two sets of freight elevators (not accessible from the central corridor) are located beyond the passenger elevators. Offices are located to the left and right of the corridor. Some interior changes have been made over the years including lowering of the ceilings. Any woodwork that may have adorned the interior is now covered or removed. However, the general interior plan has been retained.

A souvenir booklet published shortly after the building was constructed in 1915 boasted that the architecture and material of the Coca-Cola Building made "it a pleasing combination of business adaptation and beauty." It remains today an important architectural landmark in the city.

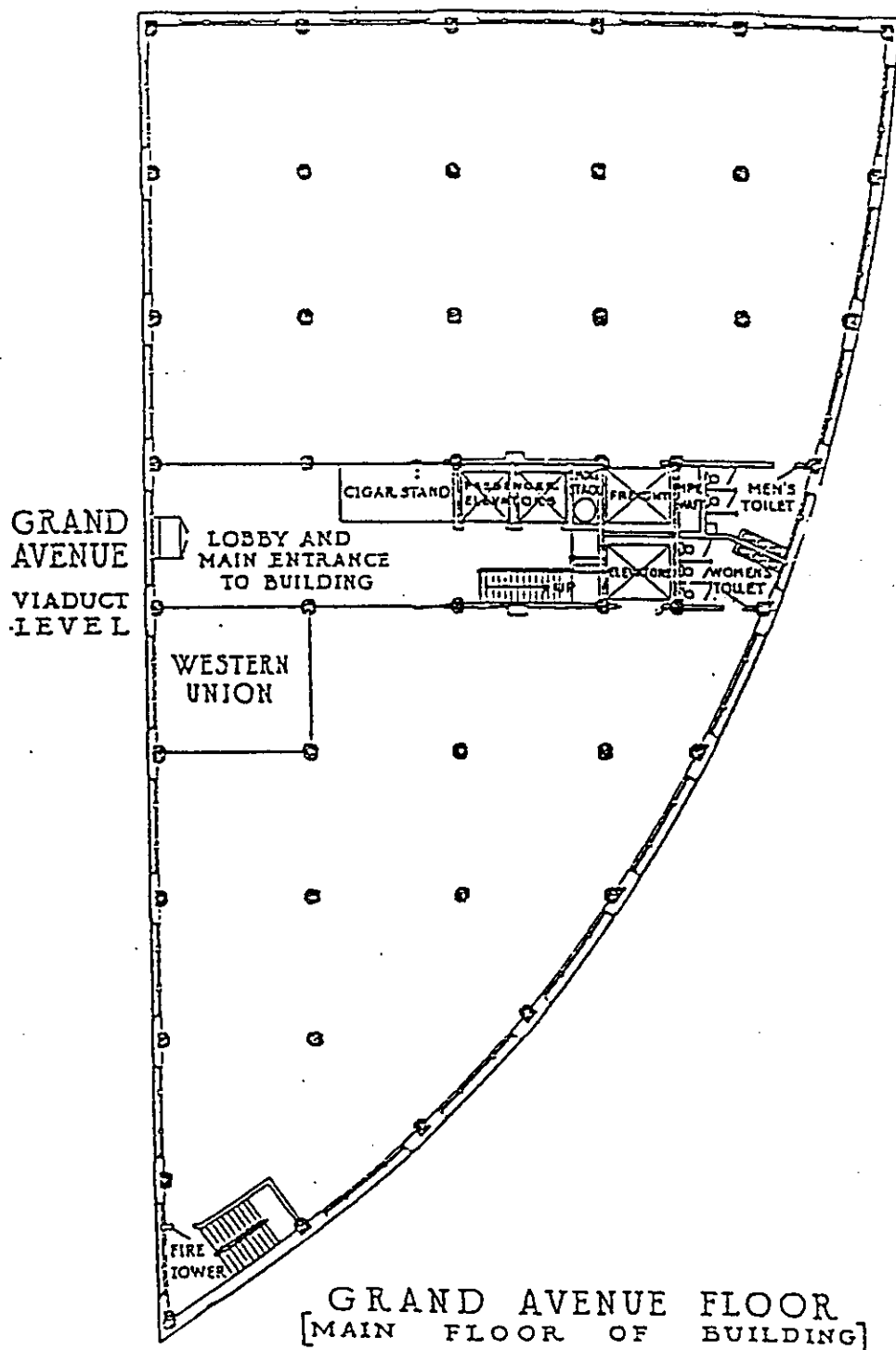
<sup>1</sup> The original plans for the Coca-Cola Building have been microfilmed and are on file at the Western Manuscripts Division of the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

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National Park Service

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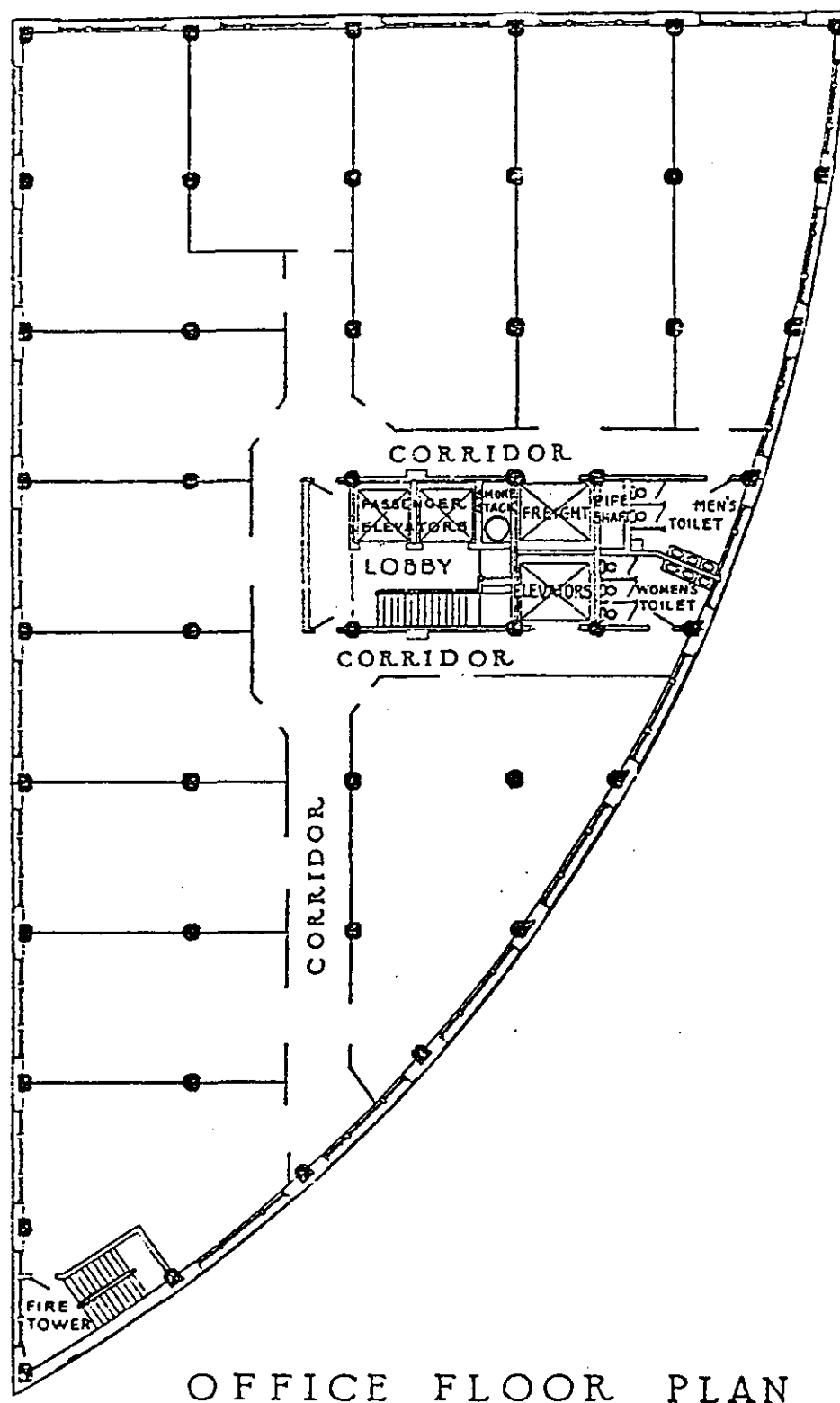
21<sup>ST</sup> STREET



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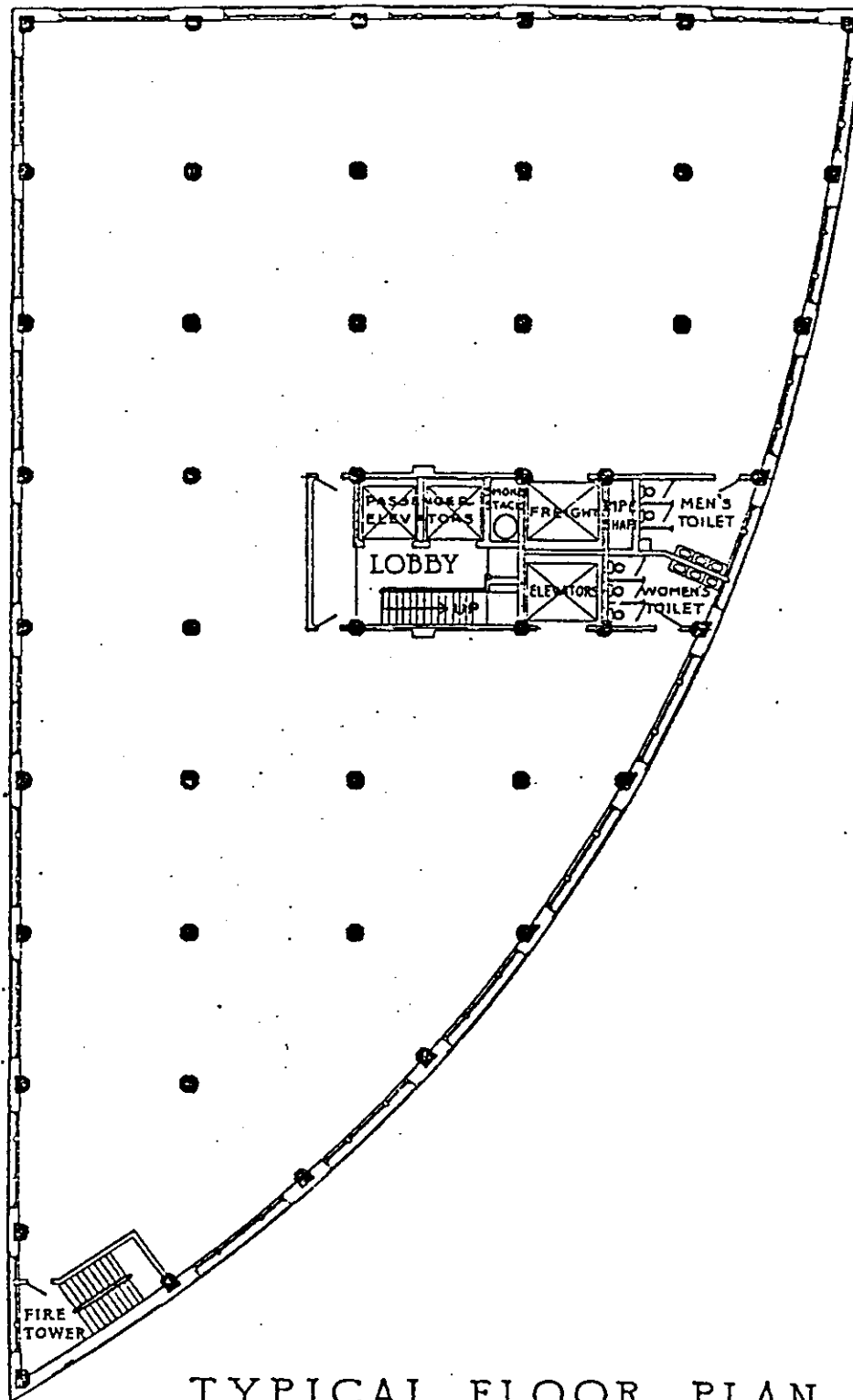
Section number 7 Page 3



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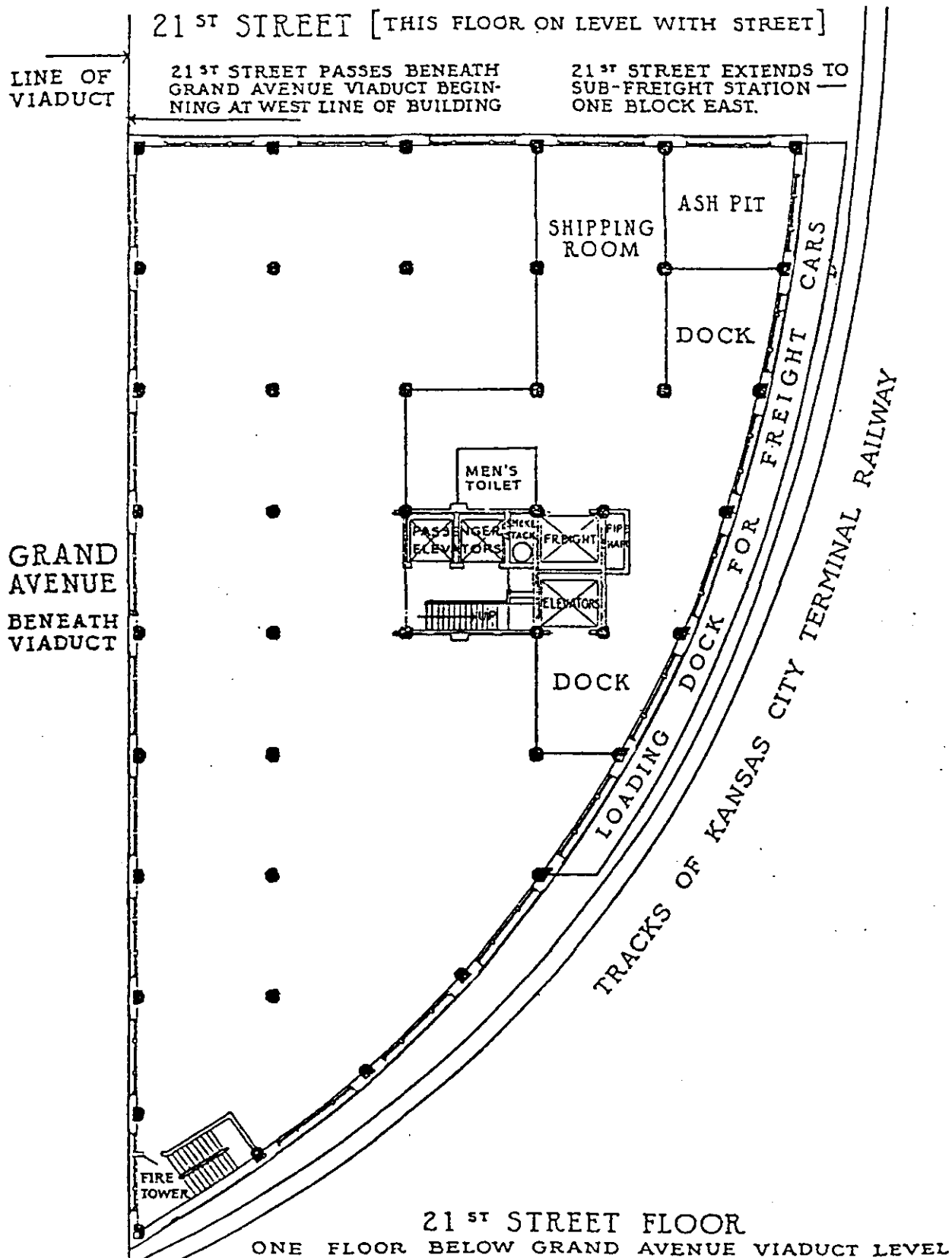
Section number 7 Page 4



TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN

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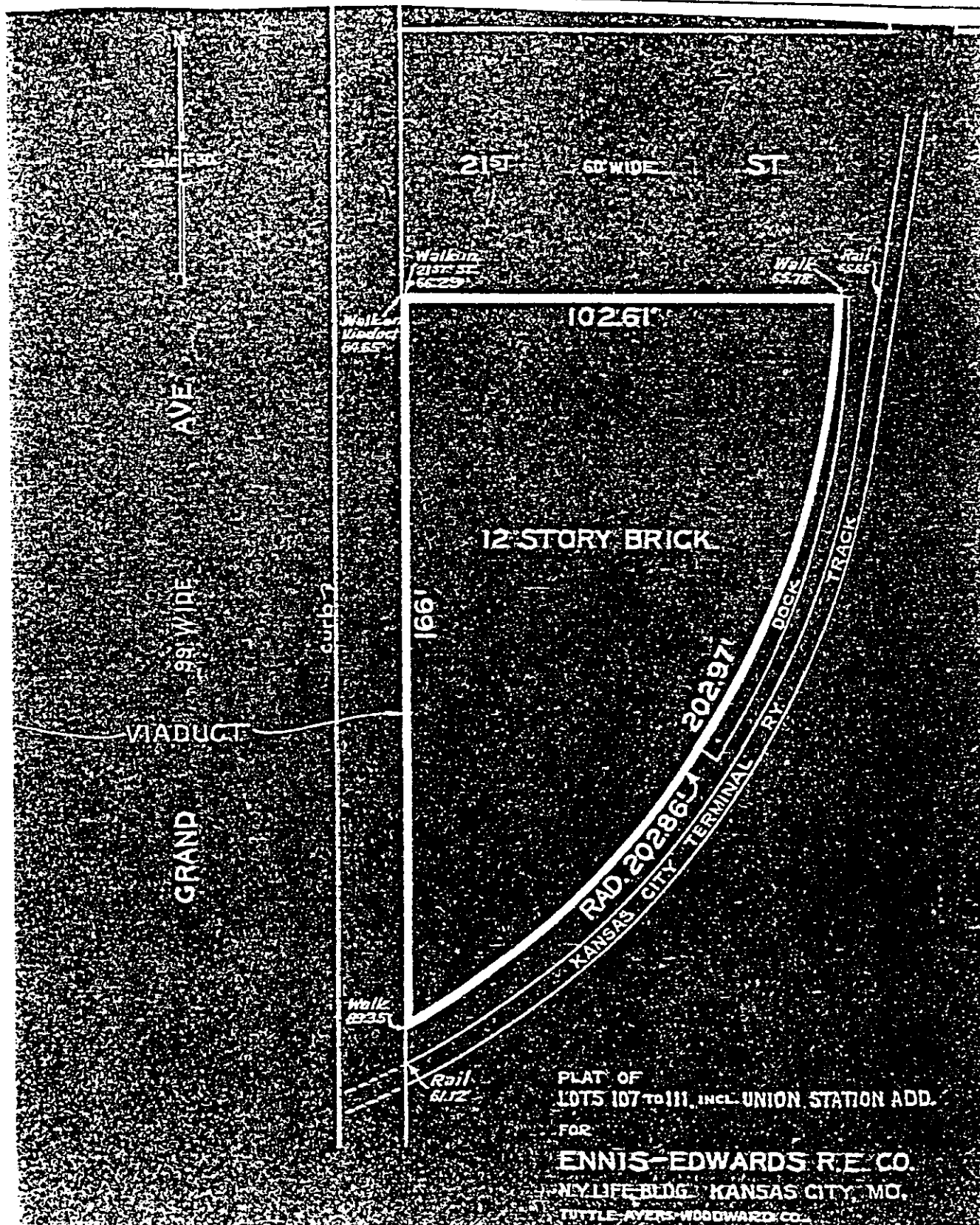
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## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1914-15

Significant Dates

1914-15

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

Arthur Tufts

Swenson Construction Co.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Significant in the area of architecture under criterion "C", the Coca-Cola Building at 2101-11 Grand Avenue is Kansas City's largest and most dramatic example of a "pie-shape" building exhibiting Chicago-School elements. The building is important to the architectural milieu of the city because: its design elements reflect the "Chicago School" or "Commercial Style" that influenced the architecture of Kansas City during the early part of the 20th century; its distinctive shape has made it a visual landmark in the city; and, architect Arthur Tufts' creative and pragmatic use of the land provided certain functional and design solutions. Furthermore, this building has retained most of its original exterior features as well as its general interior plan.

During the first decade of the 20th century, major advances in construction techniques - steel frame construction and the use of reinforced concrete - began to radically alter the Kansas City skyline. Steel frames were concealed beneath exterior walls of masonry. The Ingalls Building in Cincinnati is usually accepted as the first reinforced concrete skyscraper in the world. Constructed in 1902-03, the building was designed by Cincinnati architects Elzner and Anderson. The "Chicago School" or "Commercial Style" also influenced the architecture of Kansas City during this time. Commercial style buildings were generally built to a height of 5 to 16 stories, and featured large window areas. The primary objective was to provide adequate floor space at an economical cost. By the teens, the use of terra cotta as an inexpensive decorative material came into widespread use. A distinguishing feature of the "Chicago School" is a three-part window consisting of a larger central pane flanked by narrower, rectangular windows. The Gumbell Building at 801 Walnut (1903-1904), Kansas City, Missouri, is an early example of a large office building constructed of concrete. Architect John W. McKecknie combined Chicago School windows with Neo-Classical sculpture details.

The Coca-Cola Building (1914-15) was executed in steel frame and reinforced concrete and displayed Chicago-style windows and classical elements. The classical ornamentation included brick pilasters dividing the lower level windows and the bracketed terra cotta cornice with dentils and palmettes.

☒ See continuation sheet

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COCA-COLA BUILDING

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These decorative elements, as well as the brick veneer, are intact. Some interior changes have been made over the years including lowering of the ceilings. However, the general interior plan, which was designed to carry a floor load sufficient for general loft tenancies, has been retained.

By 1915, when the Coca-Cola Building was completed, several commercial buildings were designed with Chicago School and classical elements. These include the Muehlebach Hotel, 1204 Baltimore (Holabird and Roche, 1914-15, listed: National Register), a rectangular building exhibiting classical ornamentation; the Hotel Bray, 1114 Baltimore (John Martling, 1915, listed: National Register), a four-bay, 9-story rectangular building displaying terra cotta gables; and the Interstate Building (1300 Locust, John Sunderland, 1914-15) another rectangular building which is fenestrated with Chicago-style windows. What distinguishes the Coca-Cola Building from the others is that it is three-sided with a dramatic curved facade exhibiting Chicago School and classical elements. Three-sided buildings are uncommon in Kansas City, and the Coca-Cola Building is the largest, most intact, and perhaps most exuberant example. Other three-sided buildings with curved facades include two smaller, and less intact, commercial buildings on the north and south sides of Independence and Benton Boulevard.

A triangular shaped building could be constructed on a smaller, unusually shaped lot. Architect Arthur Tufts used not only a pie-shaped lot but also different levels of terrain: 21st Street and Grand Avenue. Twenty-first Street provides a trucking outlet leading to a sub-freight station one block east of the main freight stations in the Central Industrial District (also known as the West Bottoms). This is also the level of the main loading docks and switch tracks. Grand Avenue becomes a viaduct at Pershing Road. Other buildings along Grand use two levels of terrain (upper level main entrance, lower level loading docks). Designing a building to a particular lot is not unique in this country. Most major cities including Washington, D.C., New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans, boast examples of structures designed for unusually shaped lots. In Kansas City, however, this was not a common practice so the Coca-Cola Building stands out as one of a few examples. Another example is the Crown Center Hotel (Harry Weese and Associates) that was designed in 1973 around a bed of rock.

With the completion of Kansas City's new Union Station (Jarvis Hunt, architect) in 1914, the massive Beaux Arts building became a symbol of the superior rail facilities that Kansas City had to offer. Along with the railroad, the central location of the city made it a logical distribution center. This was the opinion of many company owners including Asa G. Chandler who, in 1909, chose Kansas City to be the west-central branch of the Coca-Cola Company. Chandler's travels from St. Louis to San Francisco inspired the following thoughts:

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"We learned that 20 states of the Union, embracing more than 2 million square miles with a population exceeding 25 million people, were more advantageously served by Kansas City than by any other city, and that the distributing facilities of Kansas City were superior to others in this district, particular so as to agricultural implements, produce and livestock products. We found it to be equally advantageously located for the passenger traffic. The business of the Express Companies and Pullman Company, we learned, exceeded that of any other city in America. Capitol and labor were apparently living together in more harmonious relations than in any other city of equal importance."<sup>1</sup>

The site chosen for the Kansas City Coca-Cola Building was conveniently located just one block east of the newly completed Union Station at Pershing and Main Streets. Baltimore architect, Arthur Tufts (1880-1920), chief of construction for the Coca-Cola Company, was responsible for the design of the building which was erected between 1914 and 1915 for \$1,075,275.00.<sup>2</sup> Tufts' work also included the Coca-Cola buildings in New York, Dallas, Winnipeg, Chicago, Baltimore, and Atlanta. Tufts did not use the same design for any of his buildings. With its curved facade, the Kansas City building was perhaps Tufts' most unique design. It was his only commission in Kansas City and his only three-sided Coca-Cola building. Along with his work for the Coca-Cola Company, Tufts was chief architect for many of the campus buildings at Emory University, and was second in command to Major J. Norman Pease in the construction of Camp Gordon. He died in Atlanta at age 40.<sup>3</sup>

After it was completed, the Coca-Cola Building was touted to be "a new pioneer building of Kansas City, adapted and constructed for the use of the manufacture and the high class jobbing merchant."<sup>4</sup> It provided factory, warehouse, and office space for the company. In 1922, the owners, the Chandler family, decided to sell the building but later regained it by foreclosure. It retained the Coca-Cola sign on the roof until 1928.

Around 1928, the Western Auto Supply Company moved into the building and retained office on the 11th floor. Over the years, the company began to take over more of the building until it purchased it in 1951.<sup>5</sup> Western Auto was founded in 1909 by George Pepperdine, a bookkeeper who thought he might make money by selling accessories for the Ford Model T by mail. The first retail store was located at 1426 Grand but it grew rapidly into a large-scale business.<sup>6</sup> Today, it is the National Headquarters of the company and retains the large electric sign (originally displaying "Coca-Cola", now "Western Auto") that has become a visual symbol in the city.

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COCA-COLA BUILDING

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The terrain, the shape of the lot, position of the streets and the unusual shape of the building all lend themselves for increased light into the building and convey a dramatic visual impact.

- <sup>1</sup> The Coca-Cola Building, Kansas City, Missouri, Souvenir booklet, Union Bank Note Co., Kansas City, n.d.; n.p.
- <sup>2</sup> Building Permit #1130, July 20, 1914; Western Contractor March 24, 1915.
- <sup>3</sup> Atlanta Contractor, Tues. Feb. 24, 1920, pg. 8.
- <sup>4</sup> The Coca-Cola Building, Kansas City, Missouri, n.p.
- <sup>5</sup> Kansas Citian, "Western Auto's First Fifty Years in Kansas City", April 7, 1957.
- <sup>6</sup> Kansas City Star, May 16, 1971.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Atlanta Contractor, Tues., Feb. 24, 1920, pg. 8

Building Permit #11302, July 20, 1914

The Coca-Cola Building, Kansas City, MO Souvenir booklet,

Union Bank Note Co., Kansas City, MO n.d.

General Report on the Coca Cola Building, Ennis-Edwards

Realty Co., New York Life Building, n.d.

Kansas Citian. "Western Auto's First Fifty Years in Kansas City"

April 7, 1959

Kansas City Star. August 31, 1924; July 15, 1928; August 6, 1950; May 16, 1917;

April 17, 1984; March 12, 1916.

Kansas City Times, May 15, 1971

Final Survey Report, Central Business District, Sherry Piland, Landmarks

Commission of Kansas City, MO May 1986

Western Contractor, July 9, 1913, p. 26; March 24, 1915, p. 28; August 18, 1915, p. 16.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): n/a

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)  
has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings

Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State historic preservation office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☒ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 1 acre

### UTM References

A 

1	5
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3	6	3	2	5	0
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4	3	2	7	5	0	0
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Zone Easting

Northing

B 

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Zone

Easting

Northing

C 

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D 

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☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description The boundaries of the property are contained within the legal description:

Lots 107-111 Union Station Addition, an addition to Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, being the property located at the southeast corner of 21st Street and Grand Avenue known as 2101-17 Grand Avenue.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries at the property were determined by the legal description as recorded in the City Assessor's Office, 2nd floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.

☐ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Melanie A. Betz, Architectural Historian

organization Landmarks Commission

date January 13, 1988

street & number 414 E. 12th Street, City Hall

telephone (816) 274-2555

city or town Kansas City

state MO zip code 64106



WESTERN AUTO BUILDING  
 2101-11 Grand Avenue  
 Kansas City, MO

Scale: 1:24000

UTM Reference:

15/363250/4327500

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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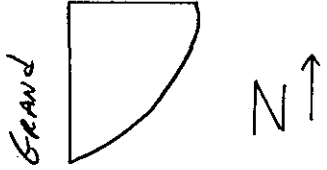
COCA-COLA BUILDING

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2. Hugh Davidson  
Preservation Planner and State Contact Person  
Department of Natural Resources  
Historic Preservation Program  
P. O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102  
Date: July 1, 1988  
Telephone: 314/751-5377

# HISTORIC INVENTORY

1. No. 104-B		4. Present Name(s) <i>NR</i>		104-B
2. County Jackson		5. Other Name(s) Coca-Cola Building		
3. Location of Negatives MT# 91-3 Landmarks Commission of KC				
6. Specific Location  2101-11 Grand Avenue		16. Thematic Category	28. No. of Stories 12	County
7. City or Town If Rural, Township & Vicinity Kansas City, Missouri		17. Date(s) or Period 1914-15	29. Basement? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Site Plan with North Arrow <i>E. 21st Street</i> 		18. Style or Design	30. Foundation Material	
9. Coordinates UTM Lat. Long.		19. Architect or Engineer Arthur Tuft (Baltimore)	31. Wall Construction steel reinforced concrete	Present Name(s) Western Auto
10. Site Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure Object <input type="checkbox"/>		20. Contractor or Builder Swenson Construction Co.	32. Roof Type & Material flat; tar & gravel	
11. On National Register? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		21. Original Use, if apparent Commercial	33. No. of Bays Front Side	
12. Is It Eligible? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		22. Present Use Commercial	34. Wall Treatment brick, metal, terra cotta	Western Auto
13. Part of Estab. Hist. Dist.? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		23. Ownership Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	35. Plan Shape irregular	
14. District Potent'l? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		24. Owner's Name & Address, if known	36. Changes (Explain in #42) Addition <input type="checkbox"/> Alter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	
15. Name of Established District		25. Open to Public? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	37. Condition Interior Exterior -good-	County
42. Further Description of Important Features The building faces west onto Grand. The building is characterized by its dramatic curved facades on the south and east. The Grand Avenue frontage features a row of storefront panes on the ground story, which reflects a modern alteration. The north and south facades have their ground story bays divided by pilasters. Projecting courses are placed above the second and third stories. A denticulated molding is placed below the bracketed cornice, and palmette antemion rise above the parapet. The building contains 150,000 square feet. One story is concealed by the rise of the Grand Ave. Viaduct in front of the building.		26. Local Contact Person or Organization Landmarks Commission of KC	38. Preservation Underway? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
43. History and Significance This 150,000 square foot building was completed in September, 1915, providing factory, warehouse, and office space for the Coca-Cola Company of Atlanta, Georgia. The Candler family (head of the Coca-Cola Company) sold the building in 1922, then later regained it by foreclosure. The building retained the Coca-Cola name until 1928. Since c. 1930 it has been occupied by Western Auto.		27. Other Surveys in Which Included	39. Endangered? By What? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
44. Description of Environment and Outbuildings The Terminal Railroad tracks run south of this building. To the north and west are other commercial buildings. A surface parking lot is to the east.		40. Visible from Public Road? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	41. Distance from and Frontage on Road 166 Feet on Grand	County
45. Sources of Information Western Contractor, July 9, 1913, p. 26; March 24, 1915, p. 28. BP# 11302 Kansas City Star, March 12, 1916, p. 13A; Aug. 6, 1950, p. 12D. Western Contractor, Aug. 18, 1915, p. 16.		46. Prepared by PILAND / Uguccioni	47. Organization Landmarks Commission	
		48. Date 10/21/82	49. Revision Date(s)	



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

RECEIVED

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
PROGRAM

SEP 23 1988

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

## SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88001300

Date Listed: 8/18/88

Coca-Cola Building  
Property Name

Jackson  
County

MO  
State

Multiple Name \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Beth Boland  
Signature of the Keeper

8/18/88  
Date of Action

=====

### Amended Items in Nomination:

Item #7: Materials

Wall materials = brick; terra cotta. The other materials listed are not visible from the exterior.

### DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

Western Auto Building  
2101-11 Grand Avenue, Kansas City, MO  
M. Betz, photographer, September, 1987  
Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, MO  
Looking northeast, photo 1 of 3



Western Auto Building

2101-11 Grand Avenue, Kansas City, MO

M. Betz, photographer, September 1987

Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, MO

Looking west, photograph 2 of 3



Western Auto Building  
2101-11 Grand Avenue, Kansas City, MO.  
M. Betz, photographer, Sept. 1987  
Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, MO  
Grand Avenue facade, looking southeast  
Photograph #3 of three



